

ISLAM

We must co-exist despite differences

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

A pluralistic society is defined as a place where different religious, ethnic and cultural groups live together. But this kind of definition is not correct. Pluralism is a law of nature. Every society is a plural society, even every family is a plural family. Studies show that every man is Mr Different and every woman is Ms Different. Therefore, any accumulation of humans, be it of the same culture or of different cultures, is bound to exhibit differences in tastes, habits, ideas, likes, dislikes, and so on. What should be done in such a situation? How to establish normal relationships and live in peace with those who are different from you? How should one establish harmony in society or family? The answer to these questions is only one: Learn the art of difference management rather than the art of eliminating differences. When difference is a part of nature, you cannot escape from it. The Creator Himself has created people with differences. At the same time He has created us in such a way that no one can live as a self-sufficient being. Every man and woman is bound to live in society. The saying, "Man is a social animal" is quite right. The only problem is that people take difference as a disadvantage rather than an advantage. Difference is a great opportunity. It is difference that is responsible for all kinds of human progress. If there had been no difference, the world would have not developed at all. Take difference as a positive phenomenon and it will become a boon for you. Difference is not an evil, it leads to discussion and dialogue. And, open discussion and dialogue lead to all kind of intellectual development. When two ideas clash, a third idea emerges. Take difference as an intellectual challenge, and it will certainly turn into a blessing for you.

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